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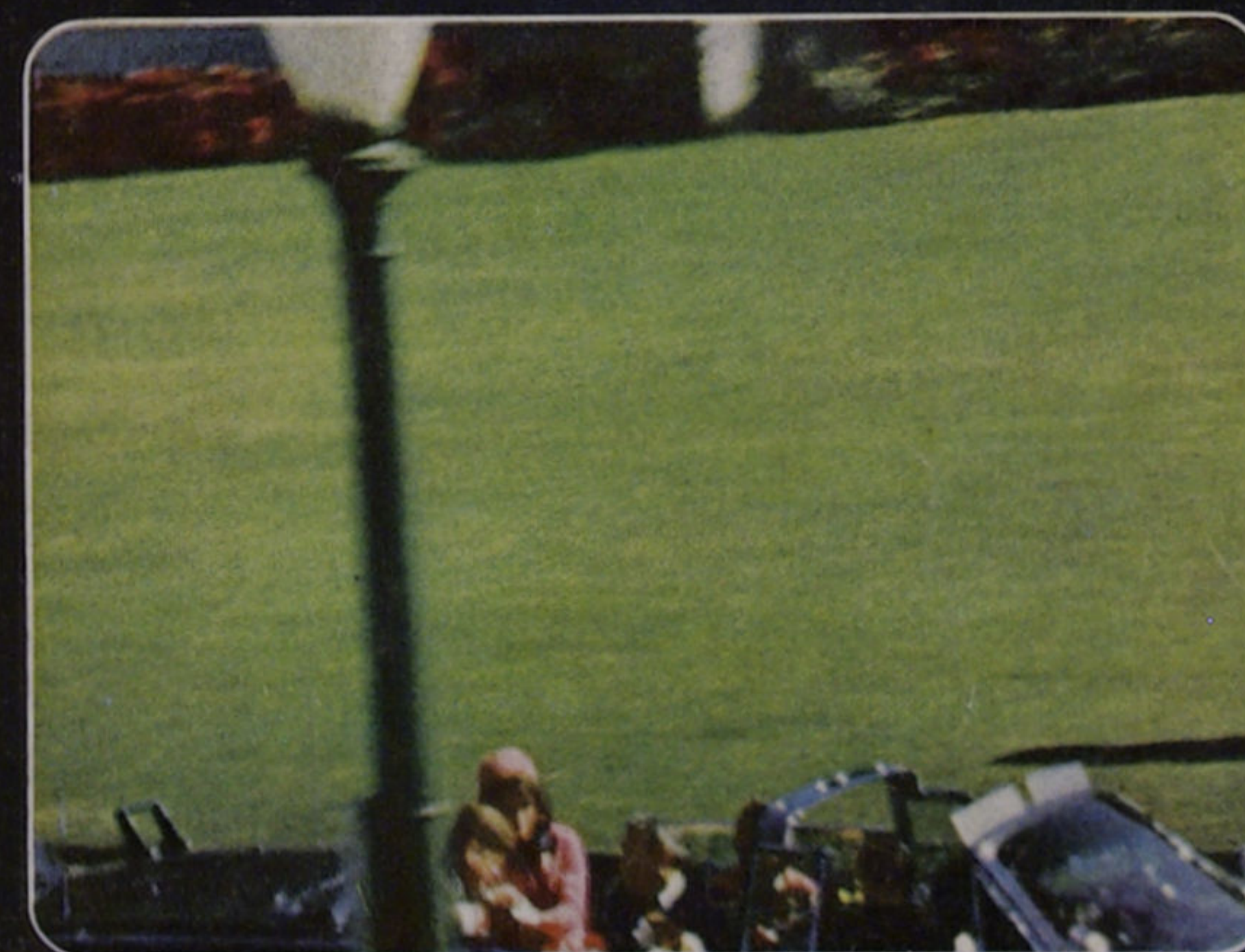
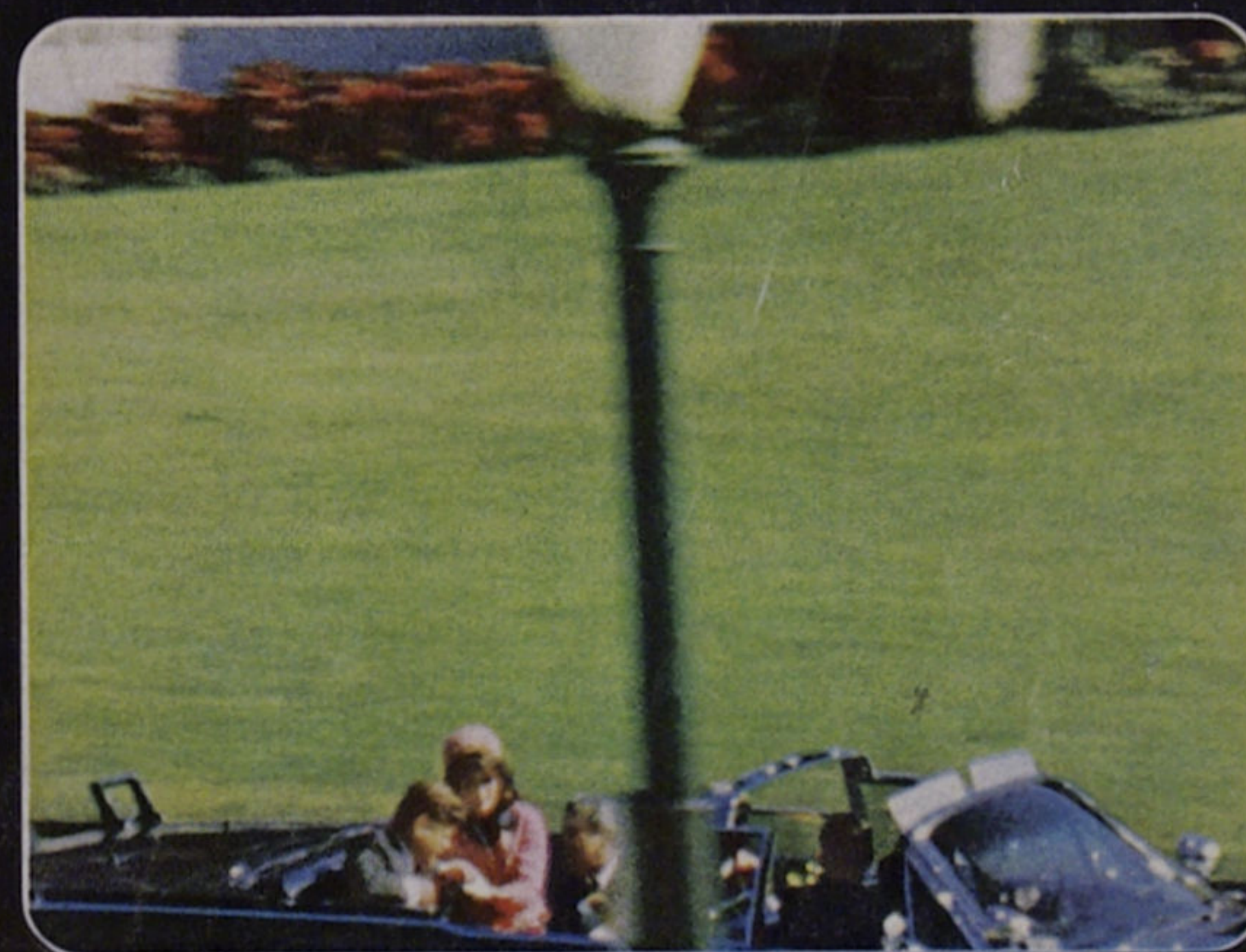
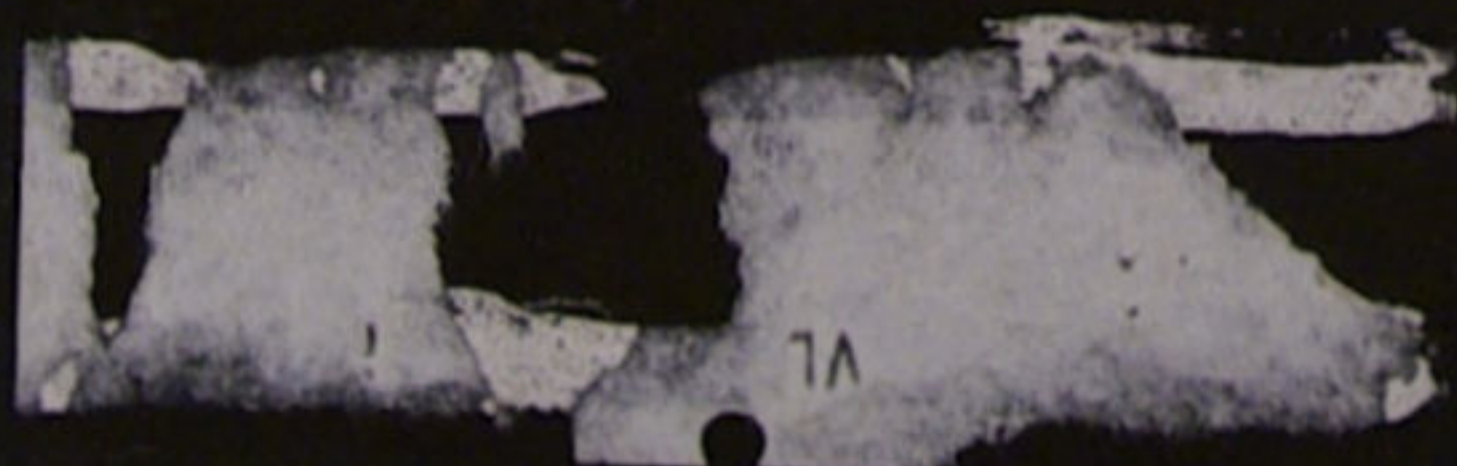
# LIFE

## THE WARREN REPORT

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HOW THE  
COMMISSION  
PIECED TOGETHER  
THE EVIDENCE

*Told by One  
of Its Members*



OCTOBER 2 • 1964 • 25¢



**LIFE**

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# ASSASSINATION: THE TRAIL TO A VERDICT



**RE-ENACTMENT.** The cross hairs of a gun sight zero in on a car simulating the presidential limousine at the assassination scene. At right, FBI man takes sightings with killer's rifle from sixth-floor window Oswald used. On floor below another agent briefs Warren panel.



## FACTS AND PHOTOS THAT SHAPED THE WARREN REPORT

It was a monumental and historic task that the Warren Commission undertook 10 months ago and completed last week. The quest for every available shred of evidence surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy led each member of the panel to Dallas. On the spot there FBI agents re-enacted the murder, lining up an open limousine under the cross hairs of the actual rifle used by the assassin. All over the U.S. 15 staff lawyers followed up leads, aided by the full investigative forces of the U.S. and, in Texas, by state and local authorities. More than 20,000 pages of testimony were taken—the panel's 296,000-word report is itself only a summary of two dozen 500-page volumes.

The major significance of the report is that it lays to rest the lurid rumors and wild speculations that had spread after the assassination. It also confirms the basic facts assumed since that tragic Nov. 22: that Lee Harvey Oswald did it, alone, and that Oswald in turn was killed not in any dark conspiracy to silence him but by another individual, Jack Ruby, who acted entirely on his own. Beyond this, the report adds a welter of previously unknown detail about the deed and the labyrinthine trails that led to it.

On the following pages, a member of the Warren Commission, Representative Gerald Ford of Michigan, tells how he and his fellow members carried out President Johnson's mandate to satisfy themselves "that the truth is known as far as it can be discovered." Accompanying his exclusive article and illuminating its points is the split-second sequence of color pictures—taken as the bullets struck—some of which previously were published in *LIFE*'s special memorial edition to President John F. Kennedy.



INSIDE ACCOUNT BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION

# PIECING TOGETHER THE EVIDENCE

by CONGRESSMAN GERALD R. FORD

*The author, Republican representative from Michigan's 5th District, is writing a book on his 10 months with the Warren Commission.*

The most important witness to appear before the Warren Commission in the 10 months we sat was a neat, Bible-reading steam fitter from Dallas. His name was H. L. Brennan and he had seen Lee Harvey Oswald thrust a rifle from a sixth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository and shoot the President of the United States.

In the shock and turmoil that followed, Brennan had headed for a policeman and given him a description of the man he had seen in the window. The police sent out

a "wanted" bulletin based on that description. Within the hour police routinely learned that a Depository employee, Lee Oswald, was missing. By this time Oswald was already in custody for the murder of Officer J.D. Tippit. Tippit had heard the bulletin and spotted Oswald, who had shot him on the spot. As police prepared to pick up the missing Depository employee—Oswald—they suddenly realized that he and the suspect in the Tippit shooting were one and the same. Though Brennan later identified Oswald, his first description—gathered hastily from 120 feet—naturally varied from Oswald's actual appearance. It probably was this discrepancy which set off the first of the countless rumors on the President's assassination: that

more than one man was involved. Thus, both here and abroad began the cascade of innuendo, supposition, imagination, twisted fact, and downright fantasy that surrounded the tragic death of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Nonetheless, the basic story of the assassination that emerged in the first few weeks was never materially altered during the commission's investigation. There were no startling developments, no sudden turns of evidence or testimony that opened up truths previously unperceived.

After taking millions of words of testimony from hundreds upon hundreds of witnesses, the Warren Commission has established that there is not a scintilla of credible evidence to suggest a conspiracy

to kill President Kennedy. The evidence is clear and overwhelming: Lee Harvey Oswald did it.

There is no evidence of a second man, of other shots, of other guns.

There is no evidence to suggest that Oswald went to work at the Depository for the long-range purpose of killing the President, that Jack Ruby knew Oswald before he killed him, or that either of them knew Officer Tippit.

There is no evidence, in short, that Oswald was more than a man alone—a sorely disturbed person whose need for recognition, at any price, festered under his own terrible inability to attune himself to his fellow man.

President Johnson phoned me at home one night, a week after the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47



**PRESIDENTIAL PANEL.** Members of the commission that investigated the assassination sit for a formal portrait. From left: Rep. Gerald Ford (Rep.)

of Michigan; Rep. Hale Boggs (Dem.) of Louisiana; Sen. Richard Russell (Dem.) of Georgia; Chairman Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the United

States; Sen. John Sherman Cooper (Rep.) of Kentucky; John J. McCloy, and Allen Dulles. J. Lee Rankin, at right, is chief counsel to the commission.

## Color sequence shows how the President was killed

One of the most important pieces of evidence to come before the Warren Commission was an eight-second strip of 8-mm color movie film taken by a bystander while the bullets were striking the President.

After a painstaking analysis of the film the commission concluded that three bullets had been fired from above and behind the President, and not from in front as the doctors who saw the wounds had originally suggested. The color pictures on the cover of this issue and on the next four pages are taken from the film. The crucial sequence is shown in eight frames beginning on the opposite page and described here by number.

**1.** A moment before the first bullet was fired, the President and Mrs. Kennedy, Governor and Mrs. Connally, smiling and waving, were passing in front of the brick building where the assassin was taking aim.

**2.** President Kennedy clutched his hands to his throat. The commission determined that a bullet had entered the back of his neck and ripped through the lower front portion of his throat. They believe the wound would not necessarily have been lethal.

**3.** As Mrs. Kennedy reached to help her husband, Connally twisted around. He told the commission he

heard a shot and turned to see if Kennedy was all right. It is still not absolutely clear which bullet hit the governor. Though he believes it was another bullet—the second fired by Oswald—the commission concluded that it probably was this same one that had passed through the President's throat.

**4.** Both Kennedy and Connally began to slump. A Secret Service agent sitting beside the driver turned to look back while onlookers, unaware that anything was amiss, applauded.

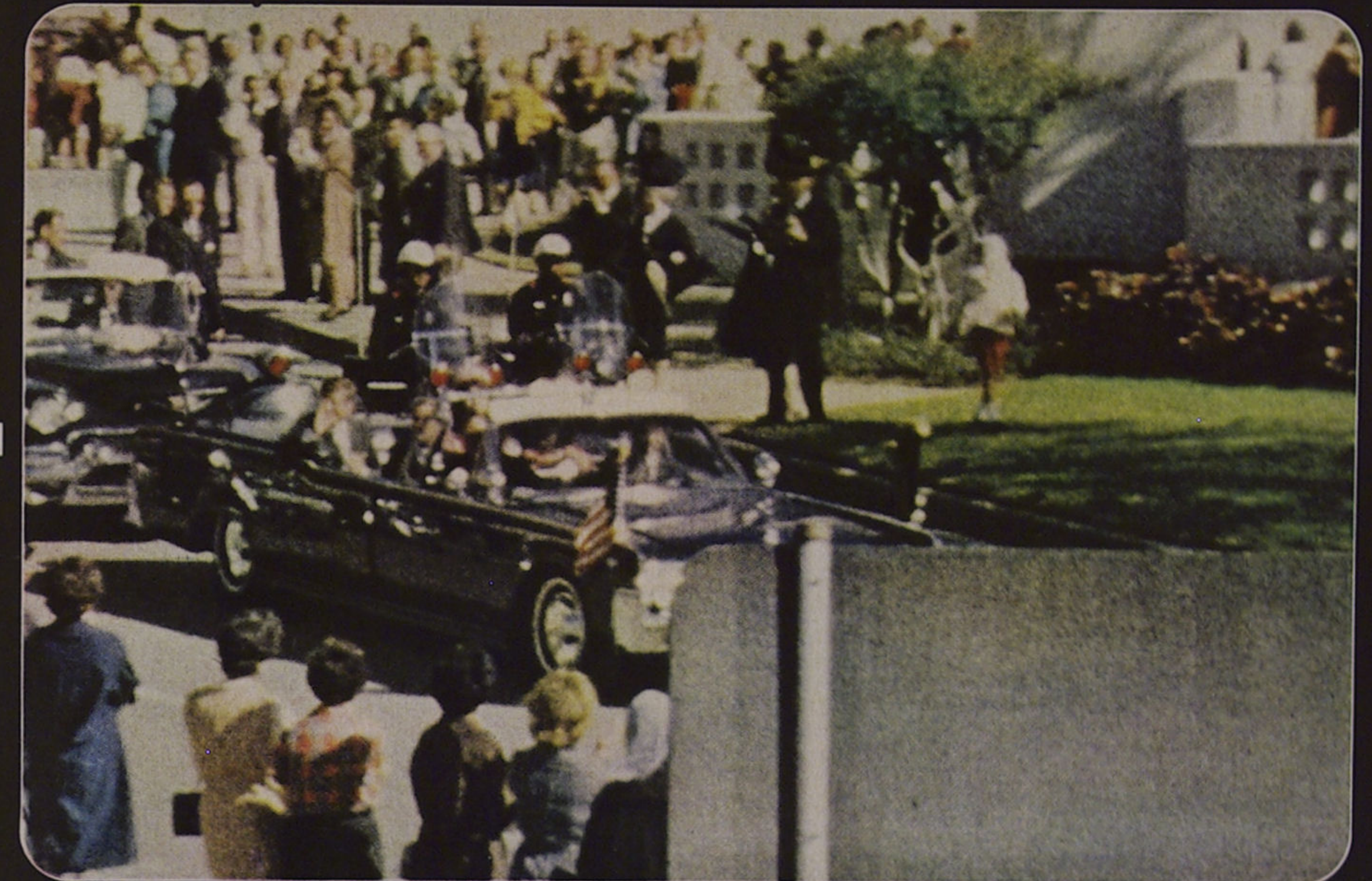
**5.** The President's head fell forward into Mrs. Kennedy's arms just be-

fore the assassin fired another bullet.

**6.** The assassin's shot struck the right rear portion of the President's skull, causing a massive wound and snapping his head to one side.

**7.** As the President lay dying beside her, Mrs. Kennedy pulled herself out of the seat.

**8.** Crawling on her hands and knees across the rear deck of the limousine, Mrs. Kennedy reached out to Secret Service man Clinton Hill, who leaped aboard. He pushed Mrs. Kennedy back into the car and the driver raced to the hospital, 3.4 miles away.





# NAILING RUMORS OF A CONSPIRACY

WARREN REPORT CONTINUED

assassination, to ask me to serve on the commission. Probably every member protested the pressure of work, as I did, and doubtless the President answered them much as he did me: "That's what they all say, Jerry." Of course I accepted.

At the outset, we broke the investigation down into these areas: the assassination itself—the President's trip to Dallas, the actual shooting and the events before and after; Oswald's movements before and after the assassination, ending in his capture and then in his own murder; Oswald's background, from birth to death; details of Oswald's trip to Russia; details of his murder by Ruby and the possibility of prior association with Ruby, and, finally, the problem of security measures to protect future presidents.

Our chief counsel was Lee Rankin, Solicitor General in the Eisenhower administration. He picked a handful of skilled men to work directly under him. From the start we felt it was important that a strong part of our staff come from outside the ranks of government, and to this end we selected a dozen of the finest lawyers in the nation to serve as consultants. Most of them have worked nearly full time.

It would have been a bulky and time-consuming process to recruit our own investigators. Instead we elected to rely on the many agencies of government which already were involved—the FBI, Secret Service, State Department investigators, Treasury agents, Internal Revenue agents, and others. To back up our expert testimony on things like ballistics and handwriting, we tapped state and local agencies as well.

As the lines of the investigation emerged, we tried to backcheck each report to avert any softening of facts that might have occurred due to any agency's policy or position in relation to the assassination. Each of the endless rumors that spread like so many oil slicks had to be traced to its origin; depositions had to be taken and witnesses called.

Before we began any of our own investigations, we had to digest the massive reports which the federal agencies had gathered in the days immediately after the President's death as well as the reports of the Texas authorities. Then we

plunged into the voluminous task of examining the people who were, in one way or another, involved by chance or association.

This brought before us an unusual cast of characters.

There was the mother, Mrs. Marguerite Oswald, a singularly angry woman whose strange attitudes and actions provided an appropriate background for the strange son she had shaped. Mrs. Oswald's irrational allegations gave rise to one of the most persistent and dangerous—and completely untrue—rumors: that Lee Harvey Oswald was, or had been, an agent of the U.S. government.

There was, also, Oswald's handsome Russian wife, a quiet young woman who at first seemed simple and direct and eager to cooperate—but who, as time went on and conflicts began to develop in her testimony, emerged as a complex and even mysterious person.

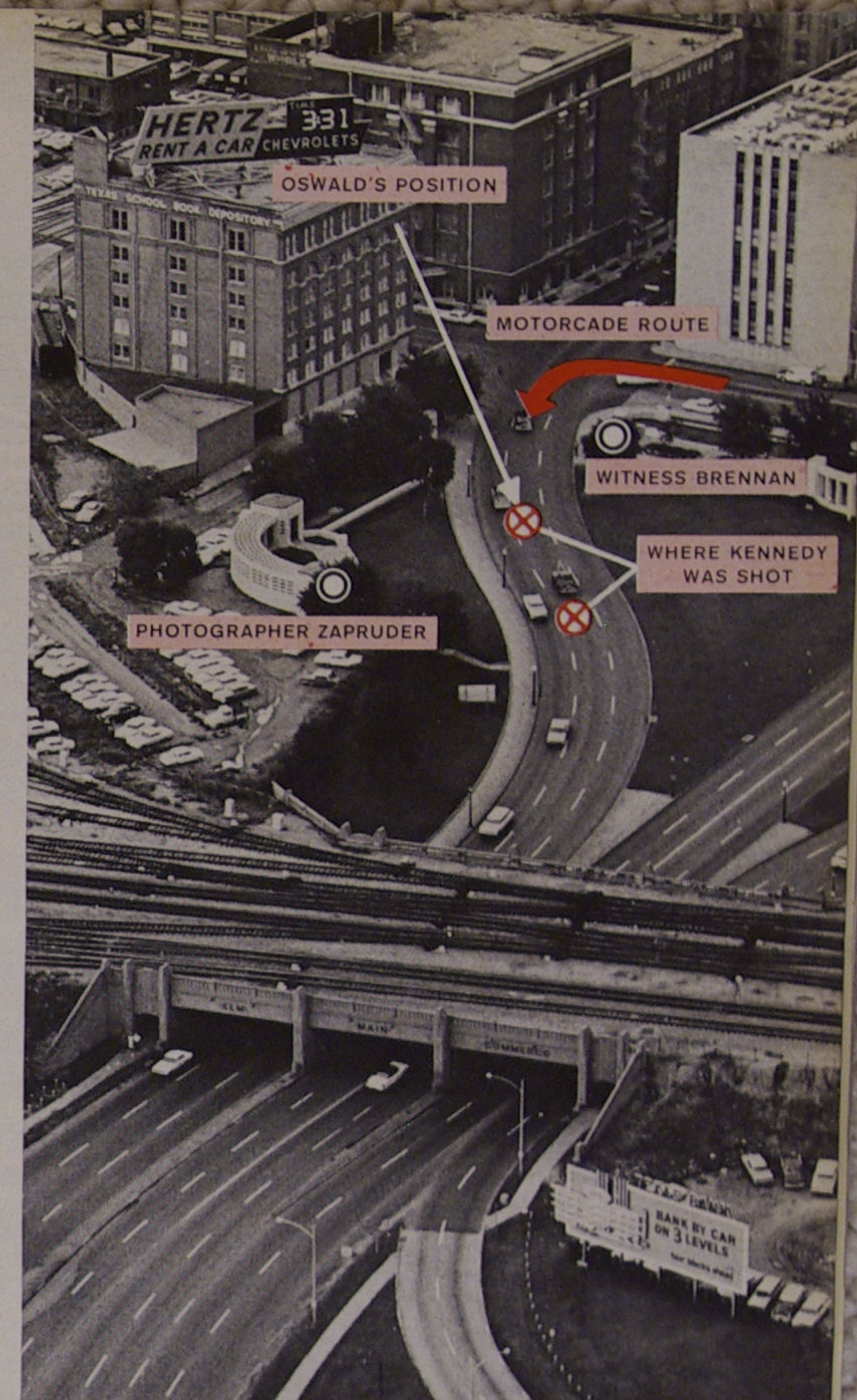
There was Robert Oswald, the brother, who came out of his erratic childhood passionately desiring stability, a solid and hard-working man whom Lee seemed somehow to have loved and yet held in sharp contempt for just these traits.

There was Jack Ruby, a sad and strange little man in the Dallas County jail who had killed the only man in the world who could have said with certainty just what happened.

And finally we came to know Lee Harvey Oswald himself, as well as any obscure man can be known after he is dead—particularly after he has spent a critical two-plus years of his life behind the Iron Curtain.

When Oswald was coming home from Russia, he toyed with the thought of writing a book. As a beginning, he jotted down a foreword. That scrap of paper, filled with misspellings, survives in the commission files: "Lee Harvey Oswald was born in Oct 1939 in New Orleans La, the son of a Insuraen Salesmen whose early death left a far mean streak of indepenence brought on by neglect. . . ."

The full details of Oswald's nearly three years in the U.S.S.R. will remain covered in mystery until and unless the Soviet government opens its files completely. It has not done so yet. Just after Presi-



## Site of the shooting, and one man who saw it



H. L. Brennan (left), a Dallas steam fitter who had waited to see the motorcade pass, was the most significant witness who actually saw Lee Harvey Oswald fire his rifle at the President. The photo above shows where Brennan was sitting (white dot) when Oswald opened fire. A white arrow from the sixth-floor window traces the first bullet to strike Kennedy when the presidential limousine (route marked by red arrow) reached the spot indicated by the top red cross. The second cross shows where the car was when the President was hit by a second bullet. When Brennan heard a shot, he quickly looked up and clearly saw Oswald in the window shooting again. Brennan's description of Oswald was broadcast by police. Later Brennan recognized Oswald at a police lineup. At left (white dot) of curve, Abraham Zapruder was shooting the color pictures seen on these pages.

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# CONCLUSION: ONE RIFLE, AND ONE RIFLEMAN

## WARREN REPORT CONTINUED

examination of the lives of both Ruby and Oswald, we were convinced there was no prior relationship between Ruby and Oswald.

There were several trips to Dallas and on one of these the staff conducted an extraordinary experiment. It actually re-created the assassination, taking a similar car through a foot-by-foot re-enactment of what had happened. The restaging was based on three strips of movie film of the actual event, plus a variety of still photographs.

By making a triangulation with surveyor's transits located at the precise point at which each photographer had been standing, we were able to place the car exactly at each step.

A man of John Kennedy's approximate build rode in the President's seat. On the jump seat in front of him, just where Governor Connally had sat, was another stand-in wearing the actual coat Connally had worn on that day, the bullet hole outlined in chalk.

The rifle Oswald had used was mounted in the window from

which he had fired, and a camera was fitted to its telescopic sight. The car was taken foot by foot down the sloping road and photographed again at each spot in its passage. By coordinating these photos and from a very close study of the evidence, the commission was able to conclude with certainty that there were three shots.

I personally believe that one of these three shots missed entirely—but which of the three may never be known. I believe that another struck the President in the back and emerged from his throat, and that this same bullet struck Governor Connally in the back and emerged from his chest, then went through his right hand and pierced his left thigh.

Governor Connally does not agree with this. He thinks the first bullet struck the President, the second hit him alone, and the third struck the President's head. Nevertheless, it is frequently true that a wounded man does not know immediately when he has been hit. I think that Governor Connally did not know for an instant or two that he himself was

wounded as well as the President.

Certainly there is no question that a following bullet finally killed President Kennedy, inflicting a massive head wound. From the moment that bullet struck, there was no question of a chance for survival. In effect, the President was dead at that moment.

**A**s we proceeded through experiment, investigation and testimony, we came to feel more and more confident of our facts. But the matter could not be considered finished until each of the hundreds of rumors was run to ground.

There were, for instance, the tales emanating from a crowd picture that included one Billy Lovelady, a youthful employee of the Depository. At the moment the President was shot, Lovelady was standing with a group of fellow employees at the Depository's front entrance. One of the pictures taken at the time of the assassination showed him in the background. When blown up, the grainy image bore a surprising resemblance to Lee Oswald.

This provoked a storm of rumor here and abroad. Major newspapers ran the picture and asked how, if there was a possibility that this was Oswald, it could be said that Oswald had himself fired the shots. Did not this give credence to the theories that there were other gunmen, who were upstairs while Oswald was down? Or to the theory that Oswald was the wrong man?

The doubt was compounded by Lovelady's own actions. He virtually went into seclusion, refusing to talk to reporters or to allow his picture to be made. It is hard to blame him. Immediately after the assassination there was an almost tangible aura of fear in Dallas. Even important officials could not be sure in the first hours that a major plot was not underway. (H. L. Brennan, who actually saw Oswald shoot the President and provided the first description, decided soon afterward that his own life was in critical danger. At a police lineup, he later told us, he recognized Oswald immediately but feared to admit it. Later, after much hesitation, he made the identification despite the feared consequences.)

The commission questioned Lovelady, and in the absence of publicity he identified himself in the picture immediately, saying he had been standing precisely at that spot. Several other employees testified that they had been there with him. The Depository manager

agreed that the picture plainly was of Lovelady, not Oswald. And that was all there was to that.

Then there was the rumor that there had been a sheriff's office alert of trouble at the Depository at 12:25 p.m. on Nov. 22—five minutes before the assassination. Did that mean someone knew in advance there would be trouble? Was this not evidence of a plot?

We checked the records of the Dallas County sheriff's dispatcher desk and found that the call, tape-recorded and time-keyed, had been issued at 12:30 p.m., just after the shots were fired.

The "second rifle" also touched off misleading talk. The weapon which killed President Kennedy was a Mannlicher-Carcano rifle; it was made in Italy. Oswald purchased it secondhand.

But an early report had quoted police as saying the rifle was a Mauser, which is made in Germany. The two rifles bear only slight resemblance. Result: more public confusion—except among subscribers to the "conspiracy" theories, for whom it was further proof of more than one gunman. When police insisted that there had been just the one Italian rifle, it seemed to many that they were trying to hide something.

We had to go back to the afternoon of the assassination to set this rumor straight. When Oswald fled the sixth floor of the Depository, he had thrust the rifle behind a

stack of boxes. It was found by the first investigating officers and a guard was put over it until the weapons and fingerprint men arrived.

A reporter, facing an immediate deadline, asked an officer standing nearby what make the rifle might be. He said he thought it might be a Mauser. The reporter filed his story, calling the gun a Mauser, and the description was relayed around the world. Although it was followed by a correction, the error stirred up wide suspicions.

**P**erhaps the most rumor-ridden subject of all was the direction from which the shots were fired. Many people found it difficult to believe that anyone but a superb marksman could have fired three shots so quickly and so accurately. Our tests indicated, however, that this was not a remarkable feat.

There also are those who insist that Oswald, in the time available to him, could not have got from the sixth floor of the Depository to the second, where he was observed moments after the shooting. I ran down those steps myself, stopwatch in hand. There was time for him to make it.

There were also some cruel happenstances that day which broke in Oswald's favor. Several carpenters had been working on the sixth floor, laying a new plywood floor. At lunchtime they all went down-

stairs. Had they stayed at the jobsite while eating, Oswald would have been denied his concealment.

Another young employee actually did eat his lunch on the sixth floor that day. He left a few chicken bones, which at first had been thought to have been Oswald's lunch. Had this employee stayed to watch the parade from the sixth floor, Oswald might have been thwarted. Instead, he joined two others on the fifth floor, at windows directly underneath the point where Oswald installed himself and waited for the President to appear.

And so the three men heard the shots fired, the ejector mechanism working, the shells hitting the floor just over their heads. The reverberations dislodged plaster that sifted down into their hair. Subsequently, their eerie testimony pinpointed the rifle shots.

When I was in Dallas, I stood in that same place while an investigator worked a rifle on the floor above. I too could hear the ejected shells hitting the floor.

**P**erhaps because of early confused reports on the President's wounds, there have been persistent rumors, too, that a second gunman—or even the only gunman—was near the railroad overpass which overlooks the scene of the assassination.

But from 10 a.m. that day, the

overpass had been sealed off by Dallas Patrolman J. W. Foster to all but railway employees. A railroad towerman could see the whole area. He saw no strangers in the yard. When the motorcade appeared, the handful of spectators on the overpass clustered to the railing. Foster stationed himself slightly behind them and all were within his range of vision.

When the shots were fired, Foster thought immediately that they came from the area of the Depository. Others present had a variety of other theories, which were subsequently advanced to reporters. The towerman, as an example, couldn't be sure whether they came from the Depository or the overpass: he said he had noted in the past that, because of echoes in the area, noises originating from either place tended to sound the same.

In any event, no one present at the time saw anything at all suspicious.

Thus we came, gradually and finally, to the end of our assignment. We had become masters of much more information than we had expected to gather, veterans of many more twisting trails than we had expected to follow. We spent nearly two months writing our massive report—on which all of us, with our different backgrounds, are agreed.

This report is the truth as we see it, as best we know it, and on this, we rest.

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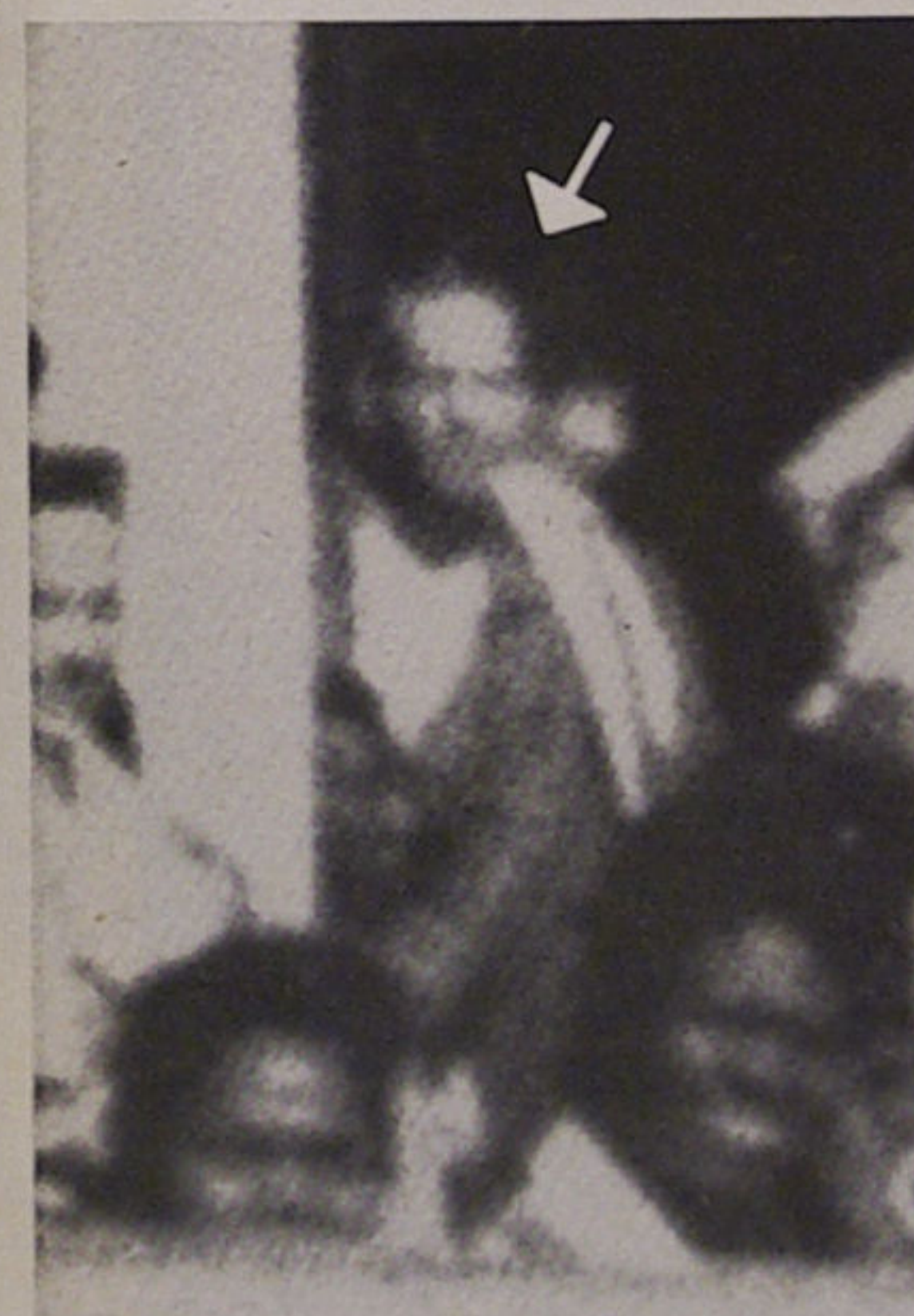


## Three witnesses and a photo of a mystery man

**KEY FIGURES.** In the basement of the Dallas police station, nightclub owner Jack Ruby (left) drew a revolver and fatally shot Lee Oswald in the stomach while newsmen and police, momentarily frozen, watched helplessly—and all the world wondered whether he did it to silence a partner in a conspiracy. Oswald's mother, Mrs. Marguerite Oswald (second

picture), called "aggressive, dogmatic, difficult" by commission member Ford, loudly demanded to be heard by the panel, insisted her son was not the assassin—and that he had been a U.S. agent in Russia. After a thorough check the commission quashed the claim. Arriving to testify for the first of three appearances before the commission, Mrs. Marina Oswald

(third picture) was shy before a smiling Chief Justice Earl Warren, who soothed her when she broke down on the stand. Speculation that Oswald could not have been the assassin was ignited by the discovery of the photograph at the far right. It showed the crowd, the Book Depository in the background, and Kennedy clutching his throat in the car at the instant



he was shot. Close examination of an enlargement of the area in front of the Depository (above) showed a man (arrows) who seemed to resemble Oswald. If it indeed was he, then it would not have been possible for Oswald to have fired from the window. But a check of Depository workers revealed the man was not Oswald but Billy Lovelady, another employee.



CONTINUED



## Bureaucratic blunders left J.F.K. a target



FBI Chief J. EDGAR HOOVER      Secret Service Head JAMES ROWLEY

For decades historians will analyze the Warren Commission's report down to the last tragic detail. But one question will glare forever. How did it happen that a hate-filled drifter, a man with a Marxist bent who had defected to the U.S.S.R. and who had worked in the U.S. on behalf of "fair play" for Castro's Cuba, could possibly have been allowed to go unwatched during President Kennedy's visit to Dallas? Even worse, how was an individual with a fat FBI dossier permitted access with a gun to the Texas School Book Depository, commanding as it did—within easy range—the scheduled route of the presidential motorcade.

The answers all trace to bureaucracy. A mandatory channel between the FBI and the Secret Service, the government agency specifically charged with protecting the life of the President, had never been established.

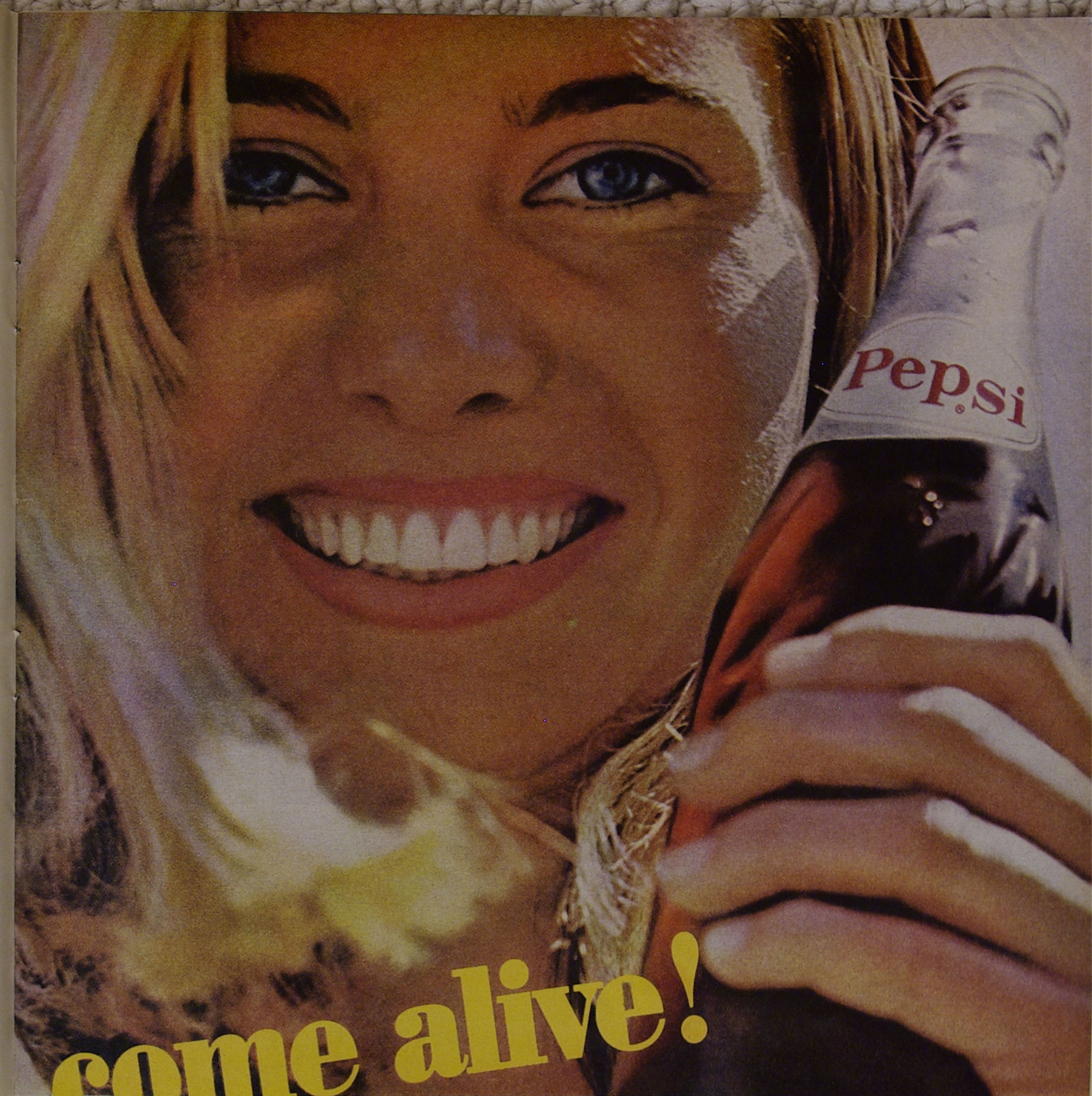
The Warren Commission calls the Secret Service record system archaic. Its files, the commission found, listed only individuals who had actually threatened the President. Where citizens of Dallas were concerned, the Secret Service files were blank. Aware of the ugly incidents during Adlai Stevenson's earlier Dallas visit, the Secret Service agent in charge of investigating Dallas prior to the President's trip improvised his own inadequate file of extremists—but he had no liaison with the FBI and its own voluminous files on Lee Harvey Oswald. Whoever was to blame, the fact is that the two agencies failed to get together, and neither gave the other the cooperation needed to protect the life of the President.



**DALLAS MEMORIAL.** A few dozen yards from the spot where President Kennedy was killed as his open limousine approached the railroad over-

pass (background) stands the concrete peristyle of Dealey Plaza. Here the people who still flock to the scene day and night have made a make-

shift memorial of a flag-decorated stand where they leave their tributes of flowers with notes that say "We love you," and "Lest we forget."



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